

## Readers' letters

# Respect should be the watchword on habitats

Sir, – Alarmist claims in the letter from Stuart Housden, RSPB, and others (Strathy 15/5/14) that native habitats are facing threats to their continued existence, are highly exaggerated and misleading.

Such comments have more relevance to the rest of Britain than the Cairngorms.

We all agree the native pinewoods should expand, but yet again the planners fail to distinguish between those which have regenerated naturally for 9,000 years, and those which have been planted in recent times.

While there is a now a larger area of native pinewood resource than before 1600AD, further extension of this habitat is desirable, and will enhance its fragile wildlife.

In the common planted origin woods, this can be achieved by restructuring, with new planting for connectivity. But the rare Old Caledonian pinewoods (OCPs) are special, and should be managed with minimum interference, except as a last resort.

The decline of capercaillie since the 1970s has been shown to be due to climate, predation and disturbance, not loss of pinewood area.

RSPB have failed to establish a need for planting in Abernethy South. Their own Environmental Statement records (page 56) 102,888 young trees, 44,233 of them broadleaves, in the Enrichment Zone they are planting, and photos (page 51) of young



broadleaves in the Ryvoan area.

They confirm there are 800 hectares of young pine in the regeneration area, and show photos of it in press releases and blogs. Planting pine in Strath Nethy will not connect with anything except the wild mountain slopes, where a natural tree-line is establishing itself. So why plant at high public cost?

All we ask is respect for Mother Nature, who established pine woods here in the post-glacial period and has been regenerating them naturally at their own pace ever since, despite the efforts of humans to alter them.

Respect for our natural heritage, regarding the integrity and continuity of natural evolution and diversity as an educational, scientific and tourism resource.

Respect for the work of many conservationists who, since the 1940s, have fought hard to establish sensible policies to protect them from further loss from misguided and unnecessary intervention.

Is this too much to ask?

**Yours etc,  
B.M.S. Dunlop,  
Ben A'an,  
Grantown.**

## New public toilets would be a better idea

Sir, – Reference the Glenmore master plan (Strathy May 15).

I fully support the comments made by Clive Freshwater in the article last week.

Glenmore is a busy place for those enjoying the great outdoors and consists of people mainly passing through to enjoy their activities. In summer it can get extremely busy with people enjoying the beach and parking alongside the road. Where is the problem? There is plenty of space. Maybe some minor adjustments to parking around the Bailey bridge would be a bonus. Of course, in winter parking at Glenmore can be chaotic at times if the snow gates are closed. The private businesses seem to be surviving well and have been trading successfully for very many years. It seems to be the publicly-owned businesses that are not doing so well.

I have a copy of the Glenmore Outline Master plan Draft 04 and would highlight some of the crazy claims and suggestions by the consultants who seem to have no idea of what goes on in Glenmore.

The consultants claim 1.4 million visits annually to Glenmore and Rothiemurchus. Just where do they get these figures from? The CNPA claim 1.4 million visitors visit the whole park every year. I am quite sure that the vast majority of visitors are just passing through Glenmore to get to Coire Cas, including over 500 coaches each summer. Why on earth do we need an enhanced entrance to Glenmore and a Visitor Hub? It is unlikely that tourist-type visitors will stop at Coire Cas and Glenmore. Coaches only have limited stops and coach passengers will have more to do on Cairngorm



Clive Freshwater: What about Badenoch?

than wandering around Glenmore.

We are lucky to have a magnificent road from Aviemore to Coire Cas. The consultants suggest that we have a 20mph speed limit along the side of Loch Morlich and 10mph through Glenmore. There are no road safety reasons for this. Can you imagine what it would be like in the ski season? Or is there a hidden agenda to finish off ski-ing?

I find it amazing that the Cairngorm Glenmore Partnership is trying to encourage yet more people to Glenmore. The area is almost entirely surrounded by an SSSI.

In the same 'Strathy', I noticed a developer in Boat of Garten is required to sign an S75 agreement to help protect capercaillie, before he can start building a few houses. There are significant numbers of caper in the Glenmore and Rothiemurchus forest.

In conclusion, I like many who

live here hope that this master plan will go no further. A bonus to visitors at Glenmore would be to build new public conveniences that would cost comparatively little.

In the late 1990s, consultants were hired to develop a plan for the Glenmore Corridor at a cost of £120,000. All that materialised from that work was a berm to obstruct people leaving the road to get to Loch Morlich beach.

Finally, if the master plan goes ahead who would be the responsible planning authority? Both Highland Council and the CNPA are members of the Cairngorm and Glenmore Partnership and therefore have a vested interest on what goes on at Glenmore.

**Yours etc,  
Ray Sefton  
12 Craig na Gower Ave,  
Aviemore.**

# Mr No-Name needs to offer a solution

Sir, – Poor Mr No-Name ("Concerned Kincaig resident", Strathy, May 1).

One could almost feel sorry for him, except that he has deserved every comment made back at him over his rude and ignorant letter.

The joy of moving into a small community like Kincaig is the constant exploration of the area and the discovery of the backgrounds and thoughts of the local inhabitants, especially the older generation, who have seen such enormous changes in their lifetimes.

Those of us who chose to come and live here, married, brought up our children, set up businesses which we believe are a credit to our valley, came prepared to adapt, change and blend with the existing culture of the neighbourhood.

I love this contact with living history and have been lucky enough to have shared a cup of tea with Donny Ross in his cosy kitchen when he has had time to tell me some of it.

If you are prepared to criticise, Mr No-Name, you should be prepared to offer a

solution. Put yourself forward for the community council that I proposed Donny Ross for all those years ago.

What has been your background experience, that you presume to tell him he is uneducated and ignorant of the area he has lived in all his life?

We, the white settlers, Cheryl Steele, Glynis Ross and I have a total, between us, of 116 years of living in Strathspey and our thoughts and opinions have been formed gradually as we listened and observed over the years.

How long has Mr No-Name been here? It is a pity we do not know.

Have you heard of the old saying, "The female of the species is more deadly than the male", especially when she is in defence of her family, her friends and her community?

That is why we all feel so strongly about the unfair comments made in that original, anonymous letter.

**Yours etc,  
Sally Freshwater,  
Bluff House  
Kincaig.**

## Parents could be more supportive of school efforts

Sir, – I recently attended an evening meeting at Grantown Grammar School. It was on drugs and alcohol awareness.

There were youth workers, health workers and community policemen who gave small presentations.

It was excellent, informal, informative and encouraged debate. I learned a lot, came home and was able to discuss it all with my own family.

The only disappointing thing was that in a school of approximately 400 pupils only 12 parents attended.

I would urge parents not to bury their heads in the sand – drugs and alcohol are not easy to discuss with our children, however the reality is that they are readily available.

Our school works hard to tackle these issues. Again I would urge parents to check school bag mail / website and come along and support our school.

**Yours etc,  
Karen M. Smith,  
3 Castle Road East,  
Grantown.**

## Miles are the currency on our Scottish roads

Sir, – I read with interest, dismay and annoyance your front page article "Put the Closed Signs Up" which appeared in last week's issue of the Strathy.

The traffic restrictions will be a real hindrance during the summer months, hence my interest and dismay.

However, my annoyance is with Transport Scotland who, although their name would indicate otherwise, seem to believe that their roads are in France, Germany, Spain etc!

So my message to Transport Scotland is we do NOT have kilometres in this country – we have miles.

Seems strange to me they don't know that.

**Yours etc,  
Margaret Campbell,  
High Street,  
Grantown.**

## It's time to back Modern Apprenticeships

Sir, – This week is both Scottish Apprenticeship Week and Learning Disability Awareness Week, presenting an ideal opportunity to raise awareness of the benefits of a Modern Apprenticeship for both employers and young people, as well as highlighting the merit in considering those with additional support needs (ASN) as candidates for such positions.

As a coalition we commend the Scottish Government for its recent work in supporting this group through the likes of the recently expanded Employer Recruitment Incentive (ERI), and the Make Young People Your Business Campaign.

However, figures from Skills Development Scotland show that only 0.32% of those in a Modern Apprenticeship have a declared disability, down from 0.48% in 2010/11. Although reliant on self-declaration, this is still woefully low and more can be done in order to promote the rewards of getting these young people, many of whom boast excellent skills, into work and to ensure that they are 'work ready' when opportunities arise.

A greater holistic approach combining financial resources as well as targeted support is vital in assisting those in these categories to re-engage with education and training, but the rewards for employers are well worth it, with higher loyalty and retention rates from those with ASN.

Employers are clearly key to this and we would urge Scotland's businesses to look beyond the label and look at the skills and talents of these individuals, especially as we mark both Scottish Apprenticeship Week and Learning Disability Awareness Week.

**Yours etc,  
The Scottish Children's Services  
Coalition:  
Tom McGhee, Managing Director,  
Spark of Genius;  
Duncan Dunlop, Chief Executive,  
Who Cares? Scotland; Stuart Jacob,  
Director, Falkland House School;  
Sophie Pilgrim, Director, Kindred;  
Sophie Dow, Founder, Mindroom;  
Niall Kelly, Managing Director,  
Young Foundations;  
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